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SUBJECT: UNGA: 63RD UNGA ADOPTS RESOLUTIONS ON ISRAEL AND  
THE MIDDLE EAST

¶1. The 63rd UNGA held its debate on agenda item 16, "The Question of Palestine," and agenda item 15, "The Situation in the Middle East," from November 24-25. Over 50 countries spoke; paragraph 8 gives a complete list. The President of the General Assembly (PGA), Miguel D'Escoto opened the debate with a statement calling for Member States to launch a campaign of sanctions to rectify the situation in Gaza. Notably, D'Escoto said that Israel cannot ignore the United Nations' call for the creation of two states, even though it has the United States as "a protective shield in the Security Council." Most of the interventions supported a two-state solution, called for Israel to end blockades and the detainment of Palestinians, and recognized the legitimacy of the Palestinian people's exercise of self-determination. Israel asked whether resolutions that criticized Israel tangibly contributed to peace in the region.

"ISRAEL'S SHIELD" AND OTHER RHETORIC AGAINST THE U.S.

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¶2. PGA D'Escoto gave a statement when introducing the two topics, which lamented the fact that the United Nations was celebrating a day of "Solidarity with the Palestinian People," instead of the creation of a Palestinian state. D'Escoto compared Israeli policies to apartheid in South Africa and noted, "the United Nations should consider following a similar non-violent campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions to pressure Israel to end its violations." Notably, D'Escoto called the United States Israel's "protective shield" in the Security Council (UNSC), but emphasized that no amount of "arm twisting and intimidation" would change UNSC resolution 181, which calls for the creation of two states.

¶3. Several countries reiterated D'Escoto's use of the term "protective shield." Although no delegates used this language on November 24 (the day D'Escoto spoke), Cuba, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and Syria referenced it on the following day. Syria additionally called for the United States to go beyond "negligence and indifference" in its policies toward the situation in the Gaza Strip. Syria and Cuba condemned the "acts of aggression by U.S. forces in Iraq on Syria in October."

SPEAKING UP FOR ISRAEL

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¶4. The Israeli Permanent Representative, Gabriela Shalev, asked whether General Assembly resolutions condemning Israel brought any tangible relief to Palestinians. She also said that the real problem in the Middle East was that of spreading extremism. Shalev said Iran continues to develop nuclear capacities and fund terrorism, while calling for Israel's destruction. Israel's Permanent Representative highlighted the need for a two-sided solution to a two-sided conflict and rejected the day of solidarity with the Palestinian people as biased. In closing, she urged the international community to strengthen moderates in the region and discard the "politics of blame." During its intervention, Iran insisted on the peaceful characteristics

of its nuclear program and accused Israel of having the truly dangerous nuclear force.

¶5. Canada voiced concern about the number of resolutions that singled out Israel, and the disproportionate emphasis on the Middle East. Speeches by the European countries went a little further in condemning both Palestinian and Israeli actions that promoted conflict. The European countries and Japan insisted, however, that Israeli settlement activities must cease.

THE REPEATED CALL: WITHDRAWAL, NO WALL  
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¶6. In its intervention and a right of reply to Israel, the Palestinian observer emphasized that Israel needed to comply with UN resolutions and argued that the problem stemmed from Israel's demarcation of "sides." In reality, the observer continued, there is only one side, the side of justice and international law, with which Israel refuses to comply. During the right of reply, the speaker said that instead of asking whether resolutions in the General Assembly contribute to peace in the Middle East, the Israeli ambassador should ask whether Israel's own actions promote peace.

¶7. Many delegates commended the work of the Annapolis Conference and urged parties to continue talks. The majority of the interventions, particularly from the Arab States and non-aligned movement (NAM) countries, included: objections to Israel's treatment of the Palestinian people as a violation of international law, the UN charter, and principles of human rights; calls to end the blockade and construction of a wall

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in Gaza; notice of the economic disadvantages of the Palestinian area due to the blockades; requests for Israel to completely withdraw from Palestinian areas; and arguments for a two-state solution. The Arab States and NAM member countries emphasized the legitimacy of the Palestinian people's right to self-determination and the defense and exercise of the same.

LIST OF SPEAKERS  
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¶8. The following delegations made interventions on the "Question of Palestine": Senegal (to introduce draft resolutions A/63/L.32-A/63/L.35), Malta (to introduce the report A/63/53), France (on behalf of the EU), Cuba (on behalf of the NAM), Algeria, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Canada, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Israel, Lebanon, Malaysia, Morocco, Namibia, Nicaragua, Pakistan, the Palestinian Observer, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, South Africa, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Venezuela, Vietnam, and Yemen. These countries spoke on "The Situation in the Middle East": Egypt (to introduce draft resolutions A/63/L.36 and A/63/L.37), Cuba (on behalf of the NAM), Australia, China, India, Japan, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Norway, Switzerland, Syria, and Turkey.  
Wolff